

Environment and Culture in Latin America (ANT 227)
Chambers 3187 – 9:40-10:20 a.m.
Davidson College (Spring 2017)

Matt Samson
Multicultural House
Office Hours: 2:30-3:30 M; 11:00-12:00 F (and by appointment)

Telephone–704.894.2613
E-mail–masamson@davidson.edu



This course addresses human-environment relations in Latin America from the standpoint of environmental history and ethnographic case studies in the region. Issues such as biodiversity, land use and agriculture, transnational flows of natural and food resources, ethnoecology, and social mobilization around environmental issues are grounded in theoretical perspectives from cultural and political ecology. Particular attention is given to the relationship between indigenous peoples and the environment and to alternative models of 'development' in Mesoamerica, the Andes, and Brazil.

Latin America has as much biodiversity as any region in the world region, and it has simultaneously served as a site of natural resource extraction in the context of what Immanuel Wallerstein has referred to as the modern world system that begins to take shape during the colonial period. Perhaps the Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano was most evocative in

describing the scale of these extractive processes and their impact on the human populations when he wrote *The Open Veins of Latin America* in 1971. The course considers the way in which contemporary environmental concerns both reflect and diverge from the patterns of resource use over the past 500 years. After a survey of political ecology as a way of approaching environmental anthropology theoretically and a study of the trajectory of human-environmental relations in Latin America, the focus shifts to the nature of environmentalism as reflected in cases of resource use, resistance to specific types of resource extraction such as mining, and the impact of so-called mega-projects on local populations. Human use of the land and perceptions of the landscape as well as a consideration of the competing stakeholders involved in addressing environmental concerns will be situated in an ecosystems framework that requires an analysis of interconnections when practical decisions are made about resource conservation and management. The case study approach in the course privileges a critical ethnographic perspective in examining how decisions about the environment impact people and communities in particular areas. Issues of human environmental justice are addressed in some detail, particularly in relation to conservation issues on the U.S.-Mexico border and when considering the impact of development agendas on the peoples of Latin America.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course students will be able to

- § Demonstrate a basic ability to map the range of contemporary environmental issues facing human communities in Latin America;
- § Articulate in both oral and written discourse an understanding of how perspectives from cultural and political ecology provide a foundational perspective for responding to environmental concerns in Latin America;
- § Explain the notion of ethnoecology and the manner in which indigenous lifeways in Latin America have the potential to challenge dominant modes of development and modernity in Western culture;
- § Critique discourses of sustainable development and ecotourism from the standpoint of the impact of these movements on local communities and case studies of mobilization around environmental problems in the region.

Readings

Shawn William Miller, 2007, *An Environmental History of Latin America*, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Laura López-Hoffman, Emily D. McGovern, Robert G. Varady, and Karl W. Fless, eds., 2009, *Conservation of Shared Environments: Learning from the United States and Mexico*, Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.

Alex Latta and Hannah Wittman, eds., 2012, *Environment and Citizenship in Latin America: Natures, Subjects and Struggles*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Jeremy Campbell, 2015, *Conjuring Property: Speculation and Environmental Futures in the Brazilian Amazon*, Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Selected Articles as noted in the syllabus and occasionally added as relevant

Course Requirements, Grading, and Attendance

Insofar as possible the structure of the class will combine lecture and discussion in a style that requires your active participation. Such participation begins by attending class regularly, asking good questions, and contributing to class discussions. All of this, naturally, presupposes that you will have completed reading assignments before class. You are also expected to respect your classmates and the instructor by arriving for class on time and remaining until the end. Cell phone use during class time is also unacceptable. Class attendance is expected, and it is your responsibility to turn in assignments when they are due and to complete any assignments that are made in class, e.g., short reflection papers, small group discussion assignments, etc. Should you miss a class, contact a classmate for notes, handouts, or assignments given for the next class period. Video materials used to supplement our readings are integral to the course and should be treated as such. Because the class requires a commitment to dialogue between students and the professor, absences and marginal participation will have a negative impact on your grade. I will use Moodle to communicate with you and post articles at various times throughout the semester. It is your responsibility to check our course on the system with some degree of regularity. Finally, one unpleasantry I don't enjoy dealing with is uninvited technology in the classroom. Texting in class is both inappropriate and disrespectful, and it will not be tolerated.

Grading in this course will follow the system outlined in the Davidson Catalog and consist of the following components:

Attendance and Class Participation–	10%
Mid Semester Review–	20%
Response Papers (and occasion reflections)–	25%
Final Examination–	20%
<u>Final Research Project–</u>	<u>25%</u>
Total	100%

The mid-semester review and final examination will consist of primarily of short answer questions and one or two essays related to the material covered in the respective halves of the course. The focus will be on your ability to conceptualize aspects of how the environment and culture intersect in Latin American society. In addition to the comments about class participation above, beginning in the third week of class, students will occasionally help facilitate class discussion by co-leading (with a classmate) the class discussion for part of one class period during the semester. The task will be to take an article or book chapter on the syllabus and present the main ideas, relating them to the larger themes of the course. Additionally, presenters will bring critiques and discussion questions to facilitate our engagement with the material. Feel free to consult with your instructor in preparing for these presentations. I envision the student part of the presentation to last no longer than 15 minutes, and assessment will be based on the style and quality of your presentation as well as your ability to elicit discussion of salient issues in the readings.

Response papers will involve brief (~3-page) responses to the readings for two different segments of the course. I will provide more details on each summary a few days before the due date (these are not research papers), but they will address the manner in which class discussions and the readings for a segment of the course relate to the overall course objectives.

The integrative aspect of the course is a research paper dealing with a salient environmental issue in a particular Latin American country from an anthropological standpoint. You will choose the topic for the paper in consultation with your instructor. Although this is primarily a research paper, it is expected that paper will reflect something of an ethnographic tone in the presentation of your work. The course readings should provide both background material and some clues about the kinds of issues you might want to address. The paper should be 8 pages in length, without the bibliography and title page, and it should employ a consistent author-date documentation style. We will discuss details of this project at the appropriate juncture in the course. A one-page project proposal due no later than Friday, 24 February, and depending upon the flow of the class at the end of the semester, students may be asked to make a brief oral presentation summarizing your work during the last week of classes. The essay itself is due on Friday, 21 April. If you would prefer to skip the final exam and complete a longer writing assignment, please make an appointment to see me.

N.B.: All written work should be provided in hard copy and posted on Moodle no later than 5:00 on the due date. Text should be in a regular 12-point font, and papers should have 1-inch margins on each side (you may need to use the custom settings in Microsoft Word). In-text (parenthetical) citations are required in written work, which should also be written in conformity with the author-date system of *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th edition (2010), which was recently adopted by the American Anthropological Association as the guide for publications (<http://www.americananthro.org/StayInformed/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=2044>). The Chicago style (<http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>) is explained most fully for students in Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 8th edition (The University of Chicago Press, 2013). As aspiring writers(!), I highly recommend placing a copy of this by your desk because of its usefulness for writing throughout the curriculum. You can find a summary page at http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html.

Academic Integrity and the Davidson Honor Code

As a student at Davidson College, you are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. For this community of learning, these standards are embodied in the Honor Code, and any violation of that code will be dealt with as stipulated. Should an ambiguous situation arise in your writing or other assignments, by all means seek clarification before determining a course of action. You may submit written assignments for help with editing (i.e., grammar and punctuation), but all written work should be your own or properly documented as having come from another source.

Student Accommodations

Students with disabilities are protected under the American Disabilities Act, and Davidson College provides support services for students with disability concerns. For assistance through the Office of Academic Access and Disability Resources contact Mallory Hall at [mahall@davidson.edu](mailto:mahall@ davidson.edu), and do make an appointment with your instructor at your earliest convenience.

Davidson is also committed to respecting religious diversity. If a religious obligation prevents you from completing an assignment or meeting a class, please communicate with your professor in advance to make alternative arrangements. Furthermore, the college works to create an environment safe from sexual misconduct. For resources in this area see the website at <http://www.davidson.edu/offices/dean-of-students/sexual-misconduct>.

Course Schedule

[Note: I reserve the right to modify course structure if it is in the best interest of the flow of the course.]

Conceptualizing the Environment in Latin America

16-20 January

MLK HOLIDAY - 16 January

Wednesday -

Introductions and Syllabus

Friday -

Miller, *An Environmental History*, introduction and chapter 1, 1-36

Sutton and Anderson, Cultural ecology, *Introduction to Cultural Ecology*, (Moodle) 91-116

23-27 January

Monday -

Miller, *An Environmental History*, finish chapter 1 and chapter 2

Sutton and Anderson, Cultural ecology, *Introduction to Cultural Ecology*, 116-132

Wednesday -

Latta and Wittman, *Environment and Citizenship*, Citizens, society, and nature (chapter 1)

Moran, 2010, Theories and concepts from the social sciences, *Environmental Social Science*, 25-36

Friday -

Miller, *An Environmental History*, chapter 3

Moran, 2010, Theories and concepts from the social sciences, *Environmental Social Science*, 37-48

Human Environmental Justice, Development, and Sustainability

30 January-3 February

Monday -

Barbara Rose Johnston, 2011, Human rights, environmental quality, and social justice, in *Life and Death Matters*, 2nd edition, ed. Barbara Rose Johnston, 9-27 (Left Coast Press)

Wednesday -

Miller, *An Environmental History*, chapter 4

Friday -

Campbell, *Conjuring Property*, preface and introduction

6-10 February

Monday -

Campbell, *Conjuring Property*, chapter 1

Wednesday -

Campbell, *Conjuring Property*, chapter 2

RESPONSE PAPER I DUE

Friday -

Campbell, *Conjuring Property*, chapter 3

13-17 February

Monday -

Campbell, *Conjuring Property*, chapter 4

Wednesday -

Campbell, *Conjuring Property*, chapter 5

Friday -
Campbell, *Conjuring Property*, conclusion

20-24 February

Monday -
Latta and Wittman, *Environment and Citizenship*, Social participation and the politics of climate in Northeast Brazil (chapter 5)

Wednesday -
Latta and Wittman, *Environment and Citizenship*, "Sin maiz no hay Pais" (chapter 4)

Friday -
Video on Resistance to Mega-Projects in Latin America – TBA
One-page Final Essay Proposal Due

27 February-3 March

Monday -
Catch-up Day
Wednesday - MID-SEMESTER REVIEW
Friday - NO CLASS

SPRING BREAK – 6-10 March

Indigenous Peoples, the Environment, and Social Change

13-17 March

Monday -
Miller, *An Environmental History*, chapter 5

Wednesday -
Latta and Wittman, *Environment and Citizenship*, Negotiating citizenship in the Maya Biosphere Reserve, Guatemala (chapter 6)

Friday -
David Carey, Jr., 2009, Guatemala's green revolution: synthetic fertilizer, public health, and economic autonomy in the Mayan highland, *Agricultural History* 83(3): 283-322
Matthew J. Taylor, Michelle J. Moran-Taylor, Edwin J. Castellanos, and Silvel Elías, 2011, Burning for sustainability: Biomass energy, international migration, and the move to cleaner fuels and cookstoves in Guatemala, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 101(4): 918-928;
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00045608.2011.568881>

20-24 March

Monday -
Marianne Schmink, 2011, Forest citizens changing life conditions and social identities in the land of the rubber tappers, *Latin American Research Review*, 46(Special Issue):141-158

Latta and Wittman, *Environment and Citizenship*, Peru's Amazonian Imaginary (chapter 7)

Wednesday –
Soren Hvalkof, 2006, Progress of the victims: Political ecology in the Peruvian Amazon, in *Reimagining Political Ecology*, ed. Aletta Biersack and James B. Greenberg, 195-232 (Duke University Press)

Friday – NO CLASS (Southern Anthropological Society)
RESPONSE PAPER II DUE

27-31 March

Monday -

Tom Leatherman, 2011, Health, human rights, and war: Structural violence, armed conflict, and human health in the Andes, in *Life and Death Matters*, 2nd edition, ed. Barbara Rose Johnston, 333-348 (Left Coast Press)

Latta and Wittman, *Environment and Citizenship*, Citizenship regimes and post-neoliberal environments in Bolivia (chapter 8)

Wednesday -

Latta and Wittman, *Environment and Citizenship*, Chile is timber country (chapter 9)

Oxfam America, 2004, Dirty metals: Mining, communities, and the environment;
<http://www.oxfamamerica.org/files/dirty-metals.pdf>

Friday -

Leslie E. Sponsel, 2011, The master thief: Gold mining and mercury contamination in the Amazon, in *Life and Death Matters*, 2nd edition, ed. Barbara Rose Johnston, 125-150 (Left Coast Press)

Conservation Agendas in Contested Space and New Directions

3-7 April

Monday -

Miller, *An Environmental History*, chapter 6

Wednesday -

Latta and Wittman, *Environment and Citizenship*, Environmentalism as an arena for political participation in northern Argentina (chapter 12)

López-Hoffman, et al. *Conservation of Shared Environments*, introduction and chapter 1 (Transboundary conservation in the borderlands: What drives environmental change?), 1-22

Friday -

López-Hoffman, et al. *Conservation of Shared Environments*, chapter 2 (Nature's fair share: Finding and allocating water for the Colorado River delta), 23-38

López-Hoffman, et al. *Conservation of Shared Environments*, chapter 4 (A convergence of borders: Indigenous peoples and environmental conservation at the U.S.-Mexico Border), 54-70

10-14 April

EASTER BREAK - 10-11 April

Wednesday -

López-Hoffman, et al. *Conservation of Shared Environments*, chapter 5 (The wisdom of the Sierra Madre: Aldo Leopold, the Apaches, and the land ethic), 71-78

López-Hoffman, et al. *Conservation of Shared Environments*, chapter 6 (Connecting Wildlife Habitats across the U.S.-Mexico Border), 83-99

Friday -

López-Hoffman, et al. *Conservation of Shared Environments*, chapter 9 (Finding mutual interest in shared ecosystem services: New approaches to transboundary conversation), 137-153

López-Hoffman, et al. *Conservation of Shared Environments*, chapter 12 (Grasslands in the borderlands: Understanding coupled natural-human systems and transboundary conservation), 188-203

López-Hoffman, et al. *Conservation of Shared Environments*, chapter 13 (Cooperative conservation, unilateral security: The story of two sister parks on the U.S.-Mexico border), 213-225

17-21 April

Monday -

López-Hoffman, et al. *Conservation of Shared Environments*, chapter 16 (The Commission for Environmental Cooperation and Transboundary Conservation across the U.S.-Mexico Border), 261-278

López-Hoffman, et al. *Conservation of Shared Environments*, chapter 17 (Transboundary conservation between the United States and Mexico: New institutions or a new collaboration?), 279-292

Final essay updates

Wednesday -

López-Hoffman, et al. *Conservation of Shared Environments*, chapter 15 (A fence runs through it: Conversation implications of recent U.S. border security legislation), 241-256

Friday -

Video on Urbanization and Implications for Latin American Society – TBA

FINAL ESSAY DUE – Wednesday, 21 April

24-28 April

Monday -

Eduardo Gudynas, 2011, Buen vivir: Germinando alternativas al desarrollo, *América Latina en movimiento*, año xxxv, II época, Febrero (462) [alternative English version available]

Wednesday -

Miller, *An Environmental History*, chapter 7 and epilogue

Friday -

Catch-up Day

1-5 May

Monday - Course Summary and Evaluation

Wednesday -

Optional Classes – 4-10 May

Reading Day – 11 May

Examination Periods

May 12 (8:40 am) – May 15 (Mon., 5:15 pm) Examination Period – Seniors (7 sessions)

May 12 (8:40 am) – May 17 (Wed., 5:15 pm) Examination Period – Others (11 sessions)

May 14 (1:40 pm only) Sunday afternoon exam period